

UKLA Fact Sheet

The White Paper *The Importance of Teaching*, published by the DfE in November 2010, included a number of tendentious statements on the teaching of reading in the first years of formal schooling. In the interests of stimulating a more informed debate on this key issue, UKLA has put together a set of Fact Cards on centrally important topics. Each of these cards contains statements of fact supported by reputable research evidence. Here we present the cards in an easily printable A4 format, to provide useful material for interviews with MPs and other key decision-makers in education.

Find out more at www.ukla.org/resources/

UKLA Fact Card 1 **Successful schools**

Really successful primary schools:

- use a balance of phonics and meaning-focused approaches to teach children to read
- give children plenty of experience of putting texts to use
- attend to individual children's literacy skills, experiences and interests
- create high levels of engagement and pleasure in reading

Sources: Taylor and Pearson (2002); Pressley et al. (2001); Guthrie et al. (1996)

All schools should offer their children a rich and balanced experience of reading.

UKLA Fact Card 2 **Research findings and the White Paper**

The Schools White Paper quotes two studies as showing that synthetic phonics is the "proven best way to teach early reading", but these studies *actually* state that:

- "phonics, as one aspect of the complex reading process, should not be over-emphasized."
- "No statistically significant difference in effectiveness was found between synthetic phonics instruction and analytic phonics instruction."
- An analysis of the effect of systematic phonics instruction on reading comprehension failed to find a statistically significant positive difference.

Sources: Camilli et al. (2003); Torgerson et al. (2006)

Schools should not be restricted to synthetic phonics, but encouraged to teach phonics systematically as part of a rich and balanced introduction to reading.

Fact Card 3 Phonics

On its own, phonics:

- won't give reliable help with high frequency words such as *one, many, some, two*, or *word*
- won't tell you whether *Gove* should rhyme with *move* or *love*

Children learning to read effectively:

- sometimes work out new words letter by letter
- sometimes look at groups of letters, such as *ast*, that they know from another word

Sources: Brown and Deavers (1991); Goswami (2010)

All children should be helped to make flexible use of different sizes of units.

Fact Card 4 Catch-up programmes

Effective catch-up programmes

- connect with ongoing classroom teaching and give opportunities for reading meaningful text
- are 'home grown' and rigorous, in that they are tailored to the needs and strengths of the children involved, but also take account of reputable research findings
- involve attention to making sense of text as well as getting the words right.

Sources: Taylor et al. (2000); Allington (2001); Taylor and Pearson (2002)

All struggling learners should receive support of this kind, tailored to their needs.

Fact Card 5 International reading comprehension scores

The most recent international PIRLS* test for ten year olds shows that of the 45 countries involved:

- England's reading achievement score dropped from 3rd to 19th place between 2001 and 2006
- England is now outperformed by Russia, Italy and Latvia
- England still scores higher than Austria and France

Sources: Twist et al. (2003, 2007) * Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

We need to help our children to become more effective readers.

Fact Card 6 Attitudes to reading

The PIRLS* 2006 questionnaires on children's attitude to reading show that:

- England's ten year olds are 37th out of 45 in terms of their attitudes to reading.
- This is a drop from the 27th position out of 35, held in 2001.
- Only 40% of England's 10 year olds have a positive attitude to reading.
- The figure for Italy is 64%, for Germany 58% and for France 57%.

Sources: Twist et al. (2003, 2007)) * Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

We urgently need to make reading more enjoyable for children.

Fact Card 7 Reading and economic deprivation

Children in England receiving free school meals tend to:

- enjoy reading significantly less
- rate themselves as significantly less confident readers
- score significantly below children from better-off homes

The position has got worse. The correlation between children's reading scores and measures of deprivation in 2006 was, at -0.45, significantly worse than the -0.36 score in 2001.

BUT, when they are engaged in reading and have books at home, children on free school meals score better, overcoming some of the effects of economic deprivation.

Sources: Twist et al. (2003, 2007); Kirsch et al., (2002)

Engagement and book ownership can reduce underachievement and help to offset the effects of economic deprivation.

Fact Card 8 The power of books at home

Children receiving free school meals who have no books at home tend to:

- rate themselves as less confident readers than those with books at home
- enjoy reading less than those with books at home
- raise their achievement when given self-chosen books

Sources: Clark and Foster (2005); Clark and Akerman (2006); Allington et al. (2010)

All children need to own books that they choose themselves

Fact Card 9 Schools in areas of economic difficulty

Successful schools in areas of economic difficulty:

- value the knowledge and experience of reading all children bring to school
- ensure those most at risk are carefully monitored
- have high expectations of all children
- teach the necessary technical knowledge about literacy explicitly
- make the children fully aware of the satisfactions of reading and its relevance to their present and future lives

Sources: Comber and Kamler (2004); Taylor et al. (2000); Allington (2001)

Schools in areas of economic difficulty should be supported to provide children with rich and satisfying reading experiences.

Fact Card 10 School libraries and reading attainment

School libraries can help close the achievement gap since:

- Children who read in their own time for enjoyment tend to be more proficient readers than children who do not.
- There is a strong relationship between reading attainment and school library use.
- All children benefit from well run school libraries, but the lower achievers benefit most.
- Primary schools with good libraries have fewer pupils lagging behind.

Sources: OECD (2010); Clark (2010); Francis et al. (2010)

All primary schools need well run libraries.

Fact Card 11 Reading for pleasure

The 2009 PISA* study of 15 year olds' reading shows that:

- In all countries – except Kazakhstan – students who enjoy reading the most perform significantly better than students who enjoy reading the least.
- Students who read in their own time for enjoyment tend to be more proficient readers than students who do not.
- In the UK, enjoyment of reading explains 22% of the difference in performance between high and low scoring students.

Source: OECD (2010)

* Programme for International Student Assessment

Developing engagement and pleasure in reading should be a priority in all classrooms

Fact Card 12 Reading material matters

PISA* tells us that what fifteen year olds read makes a difference

- Reading fiction on a regular basis is associated with high reading scores.
- Students who read varied types of texts (such as non-fiction, newspapers and magazines) in addition to fiction score even better than those who concentrate on fiction.
- Students who engage extensively in online reading are generally more proficient readers than students who do little online reading.

Source: OECD (2010)

* Programme for International Student Assessment

Encouraging a wide reading diet reading should be a priority in all schools

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Page references for quotations on Fact Card 2

The Schools White Paper quotes two studies as showing that synthetic phonics is the “proven best way to teach early reading”, DfE 2010 pp 22-23

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“No statistically significant difference in effectiveness was found between synthetic phonics instruction and analytic phonics instruction.” Torgerson et al. 2006 p. 8